



**National Park Service**  
**U.S. Department of the Interior**

Office of the Superintendent  
3655 U.S. Highway 211E.  
Luray, VA 22835  
540-999-3500 phone  
540-999-3601 fax

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## **Shenandoah National Park News Release**

**For Immediate Release** – October 17, 2005

**Contact** Karen Beck-Herzog 540-999-3300

### **Shenandoah National Park Seeks Public Comment On Environmental Assessment for Fire Management Plan**

Shenandoah National Park Superintendent Chas Cartwright today announced the release of an Environmental Assessment (EA) entitled Environmental Assessment for a Fire Management Plan. The Fire Management Plan will identify how natural and prescribed fire and fuels management projects will be used to achieve desired natural resource conditions while protecting the park and adjacent properties from the adverse impacts of fire.

A new Fire Management Plan is needed to bring fire management activities in the park up to date with new federal fire policies, such as the 2001 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy, and to modify fire management strategies and goals to incorporate the latest available scientific information about the role and effects of fire in ecosystems.

The EA explores three possible alternatives for managing fire in the park, and compares the impacts of each alternative on resources in and around the park. Each alternative describes a different way that the park will use fire and fuels management projects to achieve management goals of natural and cultural resource preservation. The alternatives incorporate different combinations of fire management tools, including fire suppression, non-fire fuel treatment, prescribed fire, and wildland fire use.

Non-fire fuel treatment is the manipulation or removal of vegetation to reduce the likelihood that a fire will start, to reduce the potential damage from a fire, or to reduce the difficulty of managing a fire. It might include mechanical treatments or herbicides. Mechanical fuel treatment is a non-fire fuels treatment involving the physical manipulation of vegetation using tools, such as cutting, scattering, piling, thinning, pruning, chipping, mulching, or mowing with hand tools, power tools, or heavy equipment. Prescribed fire is any fire ignited by fire managers according to specific conditions in order to meet resource management objectives. A written, approved prescribed fire plan must exist before ignition. Wildland fire use is the management of naturally occurring wildland fires in order to accomplish specific resource management objectives in pre-defined geographic areas.

Alternative 1 is called the No Action Alternative. It describes the current fire management program and represents the impacts of continuing to do the same things the park has been doing since 1993. Alternative 1 incorporates suppression, prescribed fire, and non-fire treatments, but not wildland fire use. Alternative 2 proposes changes in the fire management program to reflect recent changes in national fire policy. It incorporates suppression, prescribed fire, wildland fire use, and non-fire treatments. Alternative 2 is the park's preferred alternative. Alternative 3 also proposes changes in the

fire management program to reflect recent changes in national fire policy. It incorporates suppression, prescribed fire, and wildland fire use, but not non-fire treatments.

Copies of the EA are available for review at Park Headquarters, 3655 U.S. Highway 211 East, Luray, VA 22835; at the Byrd and Dickey Ridge Visitor Centers on Skyline Drive in the park; and at several County Public Libraries, listed below. The document is also available on the Web at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov> (search for Shenandoah National Park). Copies in electronic format (on CD or as an attachment to an electronic mail) are available upon request by contacting the park public information officer at (540) 999-3300. E-mailed files will arrive without maps.

**Comments must be postmarked no later than November 21, 2005.** Letters should be mailed to Superintendent, Shenandoah National Park, 3655 U.S. Highway 211 East, Luray, VA 22835-9036 or faxed to (540) 999-3601. Comments can be submitted electronically at the following web site: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov> (search for Shenandoah National Park).

Please note that names and addresses of people and organizations who comment become part of the public record. If you wish us to withhold your name and or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comments. We will make all submissions from organizations, businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses available for public inspection in their entirety.

Libraries where paper copies of the EA are available for review:

- Augusta County Library, Fishersville
- Crozet Public Library, Crozet
- Elkton Community Library, Elkton
- Grottoes Library, Grottoes
- Madison County Library, Madison
- Greene Branch of Jefferson Madison Regional Library, Stanardsville
- Page County Library, Luray
- Rappahannock County Library, Washington
- Samuels Public Library, Front Royal
- Waynesboro Public Library, Waynesboro

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